

# Curriculum Adjustment and Cultural Adaptation of Chinese Normal Schools in Malaya (1935-1957)

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## Abstract

This paper examines the development of Chinese teacher education in Malaya during the transition period from colonial system to national independence from 1935 to 1957, focusing on the interactive relationship between teacher curriculum adjustment and cultural inheritance. Through the analysis of official education reports, decrees and Chinese vernacular schools archives, this study divides this period into three stages: marginal situation under the colonial system (1935-1945), post-war reconstruction and systematic development (1945-1952), and policy shift and cultural adaptation (1952-1957). The study finds that under the inequality of resources and policy restrictions, Chinese teacher education achieved the transformation from the Chinese model to Malayan local adaptive education through strategies such as curriculum localization, multilingual education integration and community organization mobilization, while maintaining the basic continuity of cultural identity. This adaptive transformation not only reflects the Chinese community's positive response to environmental changes, but also reflects the historical experience of minority education seeking survival and development in a multicultural society. It has important implications for understanding the interactive relationship between education policy and ethnic identity.

**Keywords:** Malaya, Chinese teacher education, curriculum adjustment, cultural inheritance, colonial education policy

## 1. Introduction

### *1.1 Research Background and Significance*

The period from 1935 to 1957 was a critical historical stage for Malaya from the deepening of colonial rule to the struggle for independence. It was also an important period when the Chinese education system experienced marginalization, reconstruction and adjustment. In this historical process, Chinese teacher education, as the core pillar of the Chinese education system, was not only subject to the constraints of colonial policies, but also shouldered the dual mission of cultural inheritance and local adaptation. This study focuses on the development and changes of Chinese teacher education in Malaya from 1935 to 1957, with a special focus on the adjustment strategies of teacher education courses and their complex interactive relationship with cultural protection.

This period can be divided into three key stages: marginal status under the colonial system (1935-1945), post-war reconstruction and systematic development (1945-1952), and policy shift and cultural adaptation (1952-1957). In the first stage, Chinese teacher education was subject to unequal distribution of educational resources and policy restrictions, and mainly relied on the Chinese community to raise funds to maintain simple teacher training classes, showing obvious marginalization characteristics. After the war, with the need for social reconstruction, Chinese teacher education received limited official recognition, established a multi-level training

system, and teacher training courses began to be localized. After 1952, with the introduction of educational policies such as the *Barnes Report* and the *Razak Report*, Chinese education faced greater survival pressure. The Chinese community fought for survival space for Chinese teacher education through organizational mobilization and curriculum adaptation.

By analyzing the evolution of Chinese teacher education courses, this study attempts to reveal how Chinese teacher education, under the dual pressures of colonial rule and nation-state construction, can adapt to the political environment and protect the cultural bottom line through strategies such as curriculum adjustment, textbook localization, and multilingual integration. This study not only helps to understand the historical transformation of Chinese education, but also provides a historical perspective for understanding how ethnic minorities in a multicultural society can safeguard their educational rights and interests in policy changes. In the process of Malaya's transformation from a colony to an independent country, the adaptation experience of Chinese teacher education demonstrates the dialectical relationship between cultural adaptation and cultural persistence, which has important implications for understanding the interaction between education and identity politics in a multicultural society.

### 1.2 Literature Review and Research Gap

At present, the research on Chinese education and teacher development in Malaysia mainly focuses on the fields of education policy, Chinese society and cultural identity. Chinese scholars such as Bie Biliang and Lin Zhiguang mostly start from the history of overseas Chinese education to explore the source and training of teachers in modern overseas Chinese vernacular schools, but generally lack in-depth analysis of the local teacher system in the host country. In *Resistance and Persistence*, Wang Huanzhi systematically sorted out the development process of Chinese teachers, but the overall focus is more on macro narrative, and the development of micro-levels such as teacher curriculum adjustment, textbook localization and multilingual teaching adaptation is still insufficient. Malaysian local scholars such as Zheng Liangshu and Kua Kia Soong have described in detail the historical context and resistance experience of Chinese education, but the detailed exploration of teacher training mechanisms and educational practices is relatively limited. English literature such as Tan Liok Ee and Lee Kam Hing analyzed the challenges faced by post-war Chinese vernacular schools from the perspective of educational policy changes, providing a reference for understanding the external environment of teacher development.

In general, existing research has achieved certain results in macro-level historical narrative and policy analysis, but there are still obvious deficiencies in specific areas such as the evolution of the Chinese teacher education system, the adjustment of teacher education curriculum content, and the teacher training system. This study aims to make up for this deficiency, focusing on the development process of Chinese teacher education in Malaya from 1935 to 1957, and exploring its institutional adaptation and cultural adherence practices under the background of colonial rule and national transformation.

### 1.3 Research Objectives and Methods

This study aims to explore how Chinese teacher education in Malaya achieved a balance between cultural inheritance and local adaptation through curriculum adjustment between 1935 and 1957. Specific research objectives include: analyzing the marginal situation and adaptation strategies of Chinese teacher education during the colonial period; examining the reconstruction and diversified development of the post-war Chinese teacher training system; exploring the localization adjustment of teacher education curriculum and the actual practice of multilingual education integration; and evaluating the interactive relationship between the organizational mobilization and cultural protection of the Chinese community under the background of policy shifts.

In terms of research methods, this paper mainly adopts historical document analysis, systematically combing the official education reports of the British colonial government, education laws, Chinese vernacular schools archives and other primary historical materials, supplemented by educational journals and newspaper materials, to construct a historical narrative from multiple perspectives. At the same time, this paper uses comparative research methods to reveal the evolution of its adaptation strategy by comparing the changes in the curriculum structure and training model of Chinese normal schools in different periods.

Through systematic review and analysis, this study not only fills the gap in existing literature on the study of Chinese teacher education curriculum and training system, but also provides an important case and historical perspective for understanding the self-adjustment and cultural adaptation of minority education during the transition from colonial system to national independence.

## 2. The Transformation Process of Chinese Language Teacher Education

### 2.1 The Marginal Situation of Chinese Teacher Education Under the Colonial System: 1935–1945

### 2.1.1 Unequal Distribution of Educational Resources and the Dilemma of Teacher Training

The *Memorandum on the Notes by Advisory Committee on Education in the Colonies on Federated Malay States and Straits Settlements Reports for 1935* recorded the length of education in schools for different ethnic groups: 5 years for Malay schools; 6 years for Chinese vernacular schools (primary school curriculum); 6 years for Tamil schools (in fact, few students studied for more than 4 or 5 years).<sup>1</sup> Under the superficial institutional differences, there is a more fundamental problem of unequal resource allocation.

According to official education statistics from 1933-1934, more than half (about 51.6%) of the Chinese vernacular schools in Malaya were fully Unaided Schools.<sup>2</sup> Even for aided schools, the funding they received was much lower than that of English and Malay schools. This unfair allocation of funds directly led to three difficulties in the development of Chinese teacher education: first, there was a lack of stable funds to establish specialized teacher training institutions; second, it was impossible to provide sufficient subsidies to attract and retain high-quality teachers; third, the training facilities were rudimentary and teaching resources were long-term scarce.

The marginalization of Chinese teacher education is also reflected in the source of teachers. The 1935 Malay Federation Annual Education Report shows that of the 142 teachers employed by Chinese schools at that time, only 27 were born locally, and the rest were graduates of higher education from China, including 21 Chinese university graduates, 29 undergraduates, 18 Higher Normal graduates (i.e., qualified teachers), and many holders of the Cambridge School Certificate, Senior Middle School classes or graduates of the Special Training College in China.<sup>3</sup> This high reliance on imported teachers from China not only reflects the inadequacy of the local training system, but also becomes a reason for the colonial government to strengthen control.

In addition, further observation from the perspective of enrollment rates shows that the differences in educational opportunities between different ethnic groups are also very obvious. According to the 1931 census data, the enrollment rate of Malay school-age children in mother tongue schools is generally higher than that of Chinese (108% of Malay boys and 35% of girls in Straits Settlements; 96% of boys and 36% of girls in Federated Malay States), while the enrollment rate of Chinese children is relatively low (63% of boys and 24% of girls in S.S.; 60% of boys and 21% of girls in F.M.S.). In English schools, the enrollment rate of Chinese boys is even more limited (23.9% in S.S. and 11.1% in F.M.S.), and the enrollment rate of girls is even lower, at only 9.38% and 5.72%.<sup>4</sup> This pattern shows that although the Chinese community as a whole still focuses on mother tongue school education, its interest in English education has increased. Under the dual pressure of official resource tilt and insufficient financial support, the development of Chinese vernacular schools is difficult.

In general, the Chinese teacher education system around 1935 was deeply marginalized due to multiple structural obstacles such as finance, policy and talent supply, which laid the groundwork for the reconstruction and localization transformation of the post-war teacher system.

### 2.1.2 Policy Restrictions and Obstacles to the Development of Chinese Teacher Education

In the 1930s, the British colonial government gradually strengthened institutional restrictions on the Chinese education system in order to maintain colonial rule and prevent subversive political activities.<sup>5</sup> The Registration of Schools Ordinance, 1920 required all schools (with more than 15 students), teachers, and directors to register. At the same time, the government reserved the right to revoke the registration of schools, directors, principals or teachers at any time. Textbooks used in schools must be reviewed and approved by the Education Bureau.

The 1925 Amendments to the School Enactment further expanded the powers of the Director of Education and strengthened supervision and restrictions on the teaching content and activities of Chinese vernacular schools. In 1932, the colonial government stipulated that new schools must teach in English or Malay.<sup>6</sup> This policy

<sup>1</sup> *Memorandum on the Notes by Advisory Committee on Education in the Colonies on Federated Malay States and Straits Settlements Reports for 1935*. CO 717/119/1.

<sup>2</sup> *Johore Annual Report on Education for the Year 1934*. CO 717/111/12. Appendix 34-35.

<sup>3</sup> Federated Malay States, (1935). *Annual Report of the Education Department for the Year 1935*. Federated Malay States Government Press, Kuala Lumpur. CO 717/119/1. P51.

<sup>4</sup> *Memorandum on the Notes by Advisory Committee on Education in the Colonies on Federated Malay States and Straits Settlements Reports for 1935*. CO 717/119/1.

<sup>5</sup> Chinese Vernacular Education in Malaya, (1930). CO 717/74/4, The National Archives, p. 9.

<sup>6</sup> Lin Kaizhong, (2002, Oct.). *Constructing Chinese Culture: Ethnic Relations, Nation, and the Chinese Education Movement* (Jian Gou Zhong de Huaren Wenhua: Zuqun Guanxi, Guojia yu Huajiao Yundong, 建构中的华人文化: 族群关系、国家与华教运动). Kuala Lumpur: Centre for Malaysian Chinese Studies, p. 63. Quoted in Ye Yuxian. *Language Policy and Education: A Comparative Study of Malaysia and Singapore*. Avant-Garde Publishing, 1st ed., p. 15.

essentially ruled out the possibility of building new Chinese and Tamil schools, reinforcing the marginalization of the education system for minorities.

Under this policy environment, the development of Chinese teacher education was seriously hindered. The *Annual Report of the Education Department for the Year 1935* clearly stated: “No normal training for teachers in Chinese vernacular schools was supplied during 1935; the classes which were formerly held in the Davidson Road School, Kuala Lumpur, were discontinued in 1932.”<sup>1</sup> It was not until 1936 that four Normal training Classes for Chinese Teachers were conducted at various centers.<sup>2</sup> However, the scale was limited and it was difficult to meet the actual needs.

### 2.1.3 Early Attempts to Adapt Chinese Language Teacher Training to Local Conditions

Faced with the restrictions of colonial policies and resource shortages, Chinese teacher education began its initial exploration of local adaptation between 1935 and 1945. Chinese teacher education began with the Teacher Training Institute established by Penang Chung Hwa Confucian School (檳城中華學校) in 1906.<sup>3</sup> After the British colonial government promulgated the *Registration of Schools Ordinance in 1920*, it required Chinese vernacular schools teachers to be localized, prompting some Chinese vernacular schools to set up simple Normal Classes with the support of local education bureaus or communities to train their own teachers. Such as Chung Hwa Nan Girls’ School in Muar (麻坡中化南女校, 1923), Penang Bin Hua Girls’ School (檳城檳華女校, 1927), Confucian Private Secondary School in Kuala Lumpur (吉隆坡尊孔, 1936), Kuen Cheng School in Kuala Lumpur (吉隆坡坤成, 1936), Nam Wah School in Tianding (天定南華學校, 1936), and Penang Union Girls’ School (檳城協和女校, 1936).<sup>4</sup>

However, the overall Chinese teacher education at this stage still showed the following characteristics: First, it mostly existed in the form of simple classes, with small scale and loose system; second, it lacked a systematic training mechanism, and most teacher training classes were actually just extensions of secondary school courses, with limited specialization; third, teacher training classes were mostly funded by school directors, local Chinese communities or Chinese groups, and government support was extremely limited. Despite the lack of specialization, Penang Bin Hua Girls’ School and Nan Hua Girls’ School lasted for 14 and 12 classes respectively, and gradually trained a group of teachers with local adaptability.

By the 1930s, it was still a huge problem to provide suitable Chinese teachers for Chinese vernacular schools in Malaya. On the one hand, few Peranakan Chinese had sufficient knowledge of their mother tongue to be qualified as Chinese teachers. On the other hand, Chinese teachers introduced from China often had political tendencies and became propagandists for the Kuomintang, or even worse, were influenced by communism. Therefore, it was crucial for Malaya to train its own Chinese teachers.<sup>5</sup>

During this period, although Chinese teacher education was generally marginalized, it began to explore local adaptation in the midst of difficulties, laying a preliminary foundation for more systematic reforms after the war.

## 2.2 Postwar Reconstruction and Systematization: 1945–1952

### 2.2.1 Reconstruction and Diversification of the Teacher Training System

After the end of World War II, Malaya was in urgent need of reconstruction. Education systems of all ethnic groups generally faced an extreme shortage of teachers, and the Chinese education system was particularly serious. Before the war, the channel of importing teachers mainly relied on China, but it was interrupted due to the dramatic changes in the situation in China after the war, forcing the colonial government and the Chinese community to jointly explore new localized teacher training paths.

In 1946, the British colonial government launched the first systematic Chinese vernacular schools teacher

<sup>1</sup> Federated Malay States, (1935). *Annual Report of the Education Department for the Year 1935*. Federated Malay States Government Press, Kuala Lumpur. CO 717/119/1, p. 51.

<sup>2</sup> *Memorandum on the Notes by Advisory Committee on Education in the Colonies on Federated Malay States and Straits Settlements Reports for 1935*. CO 717/119/1.

<sup>3</sup> Zheng, Liangshu, (1999). *The History of Chinese Education Development in Malaysia, Volume 2* (Malai Xiya Huawen Jiaoyu Fazhanshi Di 2 Fence, 马来西亚华文教育发展史 第2分册). Malaysia: United Chinese School Teachers’ Association of Malaysia (Jiao Zong), p. 348.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

Mo, Shunsheng, (2017). *The History of Education in Malaysia, 1415–2015, and the Development of Chinese Education* (Malai Xiya Jiaoyu Shi 1415–2015 yu Huajiao Fazhan, 马来西亚教育史 1415–2015 与华教发展). New Era University College, Tan Lark Sye Research Institute, p. 24.

<sup>5</sup> Chinese Vernacular Education in Malaya, (1930). CO 717/74/4, The National Archives, p. 48.

training program, the Simplified Normal Training Course, which was set up in Penang, Perak, Selangor and Negeri Sembilan.<sup>1</sup> This project was aimed at training grassroots Chinese vernacular schools teachers in a short period of time, but due to hasty preparations and insufficient teaching materials and teachers, it was discontinued after only two sessions (1946 and 1947).<sup>2</sup> According to statistics in 1947, the Simplified Normal Training Course trained a total of 207 students,<sup>3</sup> which was far from meeting the needs of the rapidly expanding Chinese vernacular schools system.

In order to make up for the limitations of the scale and effectiveness of the teacher training courses, the colonial government has been promoting vacation teacher training courses and weekend teacher training courses since 1948. Vacation teacher training courses mainly recruit in-service teachers who do not meet the academic qualifications or qualifications (including those who were temporarily allowed to teach by the Education Bureau before or after the war), those who have passed the junior high school examination, high school dropouts or those with equivalent academic qualifications. After completing the course and passing the examination, they can officially become qualified primary school teachers. The weekend teacher training course was originally set up as a three-year system with classes every weekend, but due to inconvenient transportation, it was later adjusted to a concentrated vacation teaching mode, which was held during the first and second semester holidays of the school and shortened to two years.<sup>4</sup> Both types of training courses are aimed at rapidly expanding the ranks of qualified primary school teachers.

At the same time, in the face of the extreme shortage of teachers at the secondary school level, the Ministry of Education of the Federation of Malaya established a higher-level Federation of Malaya Chinese Senior Normal in 1948. The Senior Normal Class provides two years of full-time professional training for junior high school graduates who have passed the government junior high school diploma examination. The course content covers the basic subjects of Chinese, English, arithmetic, history and geography, art, handicraft, music, physical education, as well as professional training in educational principles, psychology, teaching methods, educational statistics, educational administration, etc., emphasizing the combination of theory and practice.<sup>5</sup>

The Advanced Teacher Training Classes were initially set up in major Chinese secondary schools in Penang, Perak, Selangor, etc.<sup>6</sup> The training courses for the Advanced Teacher Training Classes were completely free of charge. After passing the examination and the teaching practice supervised by the inspector, the graduates could be immediately assigned to teach in various primary schools and receive A-level salary.

In May 1952, the first and only specialized normal college in Malaya using Chinese as the medium of instruction, Green Lane School, was established in Penang, marking a new level in Chinese teacher education.

From 1948 to 1957, the Normal School trained 62 classes and 2,233 qualified teachers,<sup>7</sup> which greatly alleviated the shortage of teachers in Chinese vernacular schools and laid a talent foundation for the sustainable development of Chinese education.

### 2.2.2 Localization of Teacher Training Courses and Integration of Multilingual Education

After the war, Chinese teacher education underwent significant curriculum adjustments, mainly reflected in the localization of teaching content and the emphasis on multilingual education.

In terms of teaching content, the teacher training courses also showed a clear “Malaysianization” orientation. The content of Chinese history and geography was gradually reduced in the textbooks, and the proportion of

<sup>1</sup> Mo, Shunsheng, (2017). *The History of Education in Malaysia, 1415–2015, and the Development of Chinese Education* (Malai Xiya Jiaoyu Shi 1415–2015 yu Huajiao Fazhan, 马来西亚教育史 1415–2015 与华教发展). New Era University College, Tan Lark Sye Research Institute, p. 65.

<sup>2</sup> Cai, Lihao, (editor) (2017). The 70th Anniversary Commemorative Publication of the Senior Normal School (Gaoshi 70 Zhounian Jinian Tekan, 高师 70 周年纪念特刊). Government Chinese Senior Normal Graduates' Association, Selangor, p. 137.

<sup>3</sup> United Chinese School Teachers' Association of Malaysia, (1987). *33 years of UCSTAM* (p. 802). Kuala Lumpur: United Chinese School Teachers' Association of Malaysia.

<sup>4</sup> Cai, Lihao, (editor) (2017). The 70th Anniversary Commemorative Publication of the Senior Normal School (Gaoshi 70 Zhounian Jinian Tekan, 高师 70 周年纪念特刊). Government Chinese Senior Normal Graduates' Association, Selangor, p. 137.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. p. 21.

<sup>6</sup> Mo, Shunsheng, (2017). *The History of Education in Malaysia, 1415–2015, and the Development of Chinese Education* (Malai Xiya Jiaoyu Shi 1415–2015 yu Huajiao Fazhan, 马来西亚教育史 1415–2015 与华教发展). New Era University College, Tan Lark Sye Research Institute, p. 65.

<sup>7</sup> Cai, Lihao, (editor) (2017). The 70th Anniversary Commemorative Publication of the Senior Normal School (Gaoshi 70 Zhounian Jinian Tekan, 高师 70 周年纪念特刊). Government Chinese Senior Normal Graduates' Association, Selangor, p. 30.

local history, geography and social common sense was increased to adapt to the national identity policy promoted by the colonial government. In particular, in the civic education subject, there was basically no content related to Chinese consciousness.<sup>1</sup> This curriculum adjustment enabled teacher training students to better adapt to the local teaching environment.

In terms of school system and curriculum, Chinese teacher education gradually broke away from the traditional model of the Chinese education system and turned to combining with the local reality of Malaya. In 1949, the Federal Legislative Council decided that all government-run and government-subsidized schools must implement a three-semester system and add Malay and English courses.<sup>2</sup> Chinese teacher training classes were adjusted simultaneously, from the original single-type curriculum with Chinese and arithmetic as the core to a diversified curriculum system including Chinese, English, Malay, arithmetic, general knowledge, civic education, history and geography, physical education, etc., gradually guiding teachers to adapt to a multilingual environment.

This change is also evident in the curriculum arrangement of basic education in Chinese vernacular schools. For example, Chinese and arithmetic are the main subjects in the first and second grades of primary school; English is introduced in the third grade; Malay is added in the fourth grade, and the proportion of history, geography, civics and other subjects is strengthened in the fifth and sixth grades.<sup>3</sup> In the secondary school stage, Chinese and English classes occupy nearly half of the 36 classes per week, and mathematics and science education are also strengthened simultaneously.<sup>4</sup> This curriculum structure not only cultivates basic language and science skills, but also provides comprehensive training for the language adaptation and teaching ability of Chinese teachers themselves.

In general, between 1945 and 1952, Chinese teacher education achieved a preliminary transformation from the traditional Chinese model to a localized Malayan education system through curriculum localization, multilingual education integration, and institutional adjustments. This not only improved the professional capabilities of the teaching staff, but also laid an important foundation for Chinese education to survive and develop in the dramatic changes in the social environment before and after independence.

### 2.2.3 Malayanization of Textbook Reform

Before the war, Chinese vernacular schools in Malaya widely used textbooks published in China, which lacked reflection of local society. Although there were initial attempts to localize textbooks in the 1930s, overall, the Chinese vernacular schools curriculum was still centered on Chinese nationalism and was difficult to adapt to the actual environment in Malaya. After World War II, textbook reform became an important part of the localization of Chinese teacher education.

In 1951, William Purviance Fenn and Wu Deyao were invited to inspect the situation of Chinese vernacular schools and proposed that textbooks should replace Chinese background with Malayan background.<sup>5</sup> In December of the same year, the Ministry of Education established the Chinese School Textbook Revision Committee. In 1952, the “Central Committee for the Revision of Chinese School Textbooks” and the “Advisory Committee for the Revision of Chinese School Textbooks” were established, officially launching the process of Malayanization of textbooks.

The first set of Malayan Chinese textbooks, *Guo Yu*, published in 1953, emphasized the connection between the content and the social reality of Malaya and conveyed the concept of patriotism centered on the country of residence.<sup>6</sup> The new textbooks showed a clear trend of localization in content distribution: there was basically

<sup>1</sup> 见《星洲日报》，1952.5.27. 社论。

<sup>2</sup> Zheng, Liangshu, (2001). *The History of Chinese Education Development in Malaysia, Volume 3* (Malai Xiya Huawen Jiaoyu Fazhanshi Di 3 Fence, 马来西亚华文教育发展史 第3分册). United Chinese School Teachers' Association of Malaysia (Jiao Zong), p. 115.

<sup>3</sup> Selangor Education File No.63/51.

Mo, Shunsheng, (2017). *The History of Education in Malaysia, 1415–2015, and the Development of Chinese Education* (Malai Xiya Jiaoyu Shi 1415–2015 yu Huajiao Fazhan, 马来西亚教育史 1415–2015 与华教发展). New Era University College, Tan Lark Sye Research Institute, p. 70.

<sup>4</sup> Mo, Shunsheng, (2017). *The History of Education in Malaysia, 1415–2015, and the Development of Chinese Education* (Malai Xiya Jiaoyu Shi 1415–2015 yu Huajiao Fazhan, 马来西亚教育史 1415–2015 与华教发展). New Era University College, Tan Lark Sye Research Institute, p. 70.

<sup>5</sup> Fenn, William P., and Wu, Teh Yao, (1955). *Report on the Chinese Education in Malaya* (Fenn-Wu Report).

<sup>6</sup> Sin Chew Daily. 1 Jan. 1953.

Lin, Lianyu, (2001). *Eighteen Years of Struggles through Storms, Volume 1* (Fengyu Shibanian Shangji, 风雨十八年上集). Kuala Lumpur, pp. 32–42.

no Chinese content in the civics course; in the history course, local history accounted for more than 55%, Chinese history 30%, and world history 15%; the geography course also significantly reduced Chinese geography content.<sup>1</sup>

This change in teaching materials had a profound impact on teacher training: first, teacher trainees needed to learn how to use these localized teaching materials; second, teaching methods courses began to be based on local teaching materials; third, the overall orientation of teacher training shifted from inheriting Chinese culture to training teachers who could adapt to the needs of Malayan society. This coordinated change in teaching materials and teacher training promoted the overall localization of Chinese education.

### 2.3 Policy Shift and Cultural Adaptation: 1952-1957

#### 2.3.1 Education Policy Shift and Challenges to Teacher Education

1952 to 1957 was a critical transition period for Malaya from a colony to independence. Changes in education policies directly challenged the development path of Chinese teacher education.

The Barnes Report advocated the abolition of schools with different language streams and suggested that the official language such as Malay or English be fully implemented as the medium of instruction in order to integrate various communities in national education, achieve local identity among various groups, and finally shape a common Malayan national concept. The report triggered strong opposition from the Chinese community.

In response, the Fenn-Wu Report released in the same year recommended that the government provide more resources for Chinese vernacular schools, encourage a trilingual education system, and recommend that the British colonial government include Chinese education as part of national education.<sup>2</sup>

Nevertheless, the Educational Ordinance 1952 was passed in 1952, which was mainly based on the principles of the Barnes Report and ultimately established a national school system with English and Malay as the medium of instruction.<sup>3</sup> The development of Chinese and Tamil schools was further restricted and they were not fully integrated into the national education system.

In addition, in 1953, Aminuddin Baki proposed the “Melting Pot Theory” to establish national schools, where children of different races could study in the same school and integrate with each other to promote the unity of all ethnic groups.<sup>4</sup> This further intensified the marginal pressure of the Chinese teacher training system.

The 1956 Razak Report further specified that the ultimate goal was to “concentrate all children of all races under one national education system, with Malay as the principal medium of instruction.”<sup>5</sup>

In general, between 1952 and 1957, Chinese teacher education struggled to survive under policy pressure and achieved self-transformation, which profoundly affected the future direction of Chinese education and cultural identity.

#### 2.3.2 Organization and Mobilization of the Chinese Community and Maintenance of Teacher Education

Faced with increasingly tightened education policies, the Chinese community has begun to organize to safeguard the rights and interests of Chinese-language education, with teacher education being a core focus.

The United Chinese School Teachers’ Association of Malaysia (Jiao Zong), founded on December 25, 1952, aims to “improve Chinese vernacular schools education, promote Chinese culture, and seek the welfare of teachers.”<sup>6</sup> In order to protect the autonomy of the school board, the United Chinese School Committees’ Association of Malaysia (Dong Zong) was founded on August 22, 1954.<sup>7</sup> After the establishment of Dong Zong,

<sup>1</sup> *Sin Chew Daily*, 27 May 1952.

<sup>2</sup> Ye, Yuxian, (2018). The Impact of Language Education Policy on the School System in Malaysia (1957–2013): A Historical Institutionalism Perspective (Malai Xiya Yuwen Jiaoyu Zhengce Dui Xuexiao Zhidu de Yingxiang 1957–2013 馬來西亞語文教育政策對學校制度的影響(1957-2013)). In *Studies on Language Education Policies around the World*, edited by Li Qinan et al., p. 87.

<sup>3</sup> Watson, J. Keith P., (1980). Cultural Pluralism, Nation-Building, and Educational Policies in Peninsular Malaysia. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 1(2), 155–174.

<sup>4</sup> Kuala Lumpur: Huaren Research Centre, (2013). *National Primary Schools in Malaya: Their Problems and Suggestions for Extracurricular Activities* (Malaiya Guomin Xuexiao: Qi Wenti Yiji Dui Kewai Huodong de Jianyi, 馬來亞國民學校：其問題以及對課外活動的建議). Kuala Lumpur: Huaren Research Centre, p. 31.

<sup>5</sup> Watson, J. Keith P., (1980). Cultural pluralism nation-building and educational policies in peninsular Malaysia. *Journal of Multilingual & Multicultural Development*, 1(2), 155-174.

<sup>6</sup> *Sin Chew Dail*. 27 Dec. 1951, 7th ed.

<sup>7</sup> Dong Jiao Zong Historical Exhibition Team, (Dec. 1993). *Brilliance of Chinese Education* (Huaguang Shuiyao, 《華光水耀》). Kuala Lumpur: Dong Jiao Zong, p. 6.

it joined Jiao Zong and submitted memoranda, statements, declarations and written speeches in the name of Dong Jiao Zong to jointly safeguard and fight for the rights of Chinese education, oppose the provisions and measures of the Education Act that are unfavorable to Chinese education, and develop Chinese education.<sup>1</sup> Dong Jiao Zong became the defender of the rights of Chinese education.

The MCA Chinese Education Central Committee, established in 1953 within the Malaysian Chinese Association, provided political support for Chinese teacher education. In August of the same year, the MCA Chinese Education Central Committee, together with Dong Zong and Jiao Zong, represented the three parties in fighting for fair and just rights and status for Chinese education from the government.<sup>2</sup> Through cooperation with political parties, it became a helper for Chinese educationists in dealing with the government.<sup>3</sup>

Under the negotiation of Chinese education leader Lim Lian Geok to Education Minister Abdul Razak, the Alliance government did not include the “ultimate goal of education” in the Education Ordinance (1957) promulgated on the eve of national independence in order to maintain the unity of the three major ethnic groups and facilitate the construction of the founding of the country.<sup>4</sup> The ordinance was formulated based on the Razak Report, which established the basic framework of the Malayan education system after independence and put forward the requirement of “Malay becoming the national language, while maintaining and supporting the development of the languages and cultures of other ethnic groups in the country.”

During this period, under the pressure of policy shifts, Chinese teacher education achieved adaptive development through curriculum adjustments and community mobilization, creating conditions for continuing to train Chinese teachers after independence.

### 3. Conclusion

This study focuses on the development of Chinese teacher education in Malaya from 1935 to 1957. It examines the allocation of educational resources, policy intervention, textbook and curriculum adjustments, post-war reconstruction of the teacher education system, and the coping strategies of the Chinese community under the colonial system, revealing the evolution path and cultural adaptation process of Chinese teacher education in a complex historical environment.

First, from 1935 to 1945, Chinese teacher education was marginalized in the colonial education system. Unequal resource allocation and stricter policy control put Chinese vernacular schools in a disadvantageous position in terms of funding, teachers and institutional guarantees. Despite this, the Chinese community still established an education system to cope with colonial restrictions through self-financing and localization of teacher training classes. During this period, although the local teaching materials and training system were still based on the Chinese model, they had shown a trend of adjusting to local methods and adapting to the social environment of Malaya.

Secondly, during the post-war reconstruction period from 1945 to 1952, the Chinese teacher education system entered a new period of systematic development. Chinese vernacular schools actively responded to the call for local identity after the war, promoted the localization of teacher training curriculum content, and strengthened multilingual education and training to adapt to the national policy requirements for Malay and English teaching. At the same time, the colonial government also promoted the training of local teachers by setting up high-level teacher classes and holiday teacher training classes. In terms of teaching material reform, Chinese vernacular schools textbooks began to transform from “China-centered” to “Malaya-centered”, emphasizing the training of a new generation of students who are loyal to Malayan society. Teacher education during this period not only achieved the initial integration of teaching language and curriculum structure, but also accelerated the formation of local identity.

Finally, between 1952 and 1957, as the colonial government implemented the education unitization policy and national identity project, Chinese teacher education faced greater institutional challenges. Policy documents such as the Barnes Report and the Razak Report reflected the strong demand for education unification during the transition period between colonialism and independence, advocating the use of Malay as the main medium of instruction and weakening the independence of mother tongue education. Faced with an unfavorable situation,

<sup>1</sup> Lew, B. H., (2006). *The United Chinese School Teachers' Association of Malaysia and Its Leaders (1951–2005)*. Kajang: United Chinese School Teachers' Association of Malaysia, p. 54.

<sup>2</sup> Kua, Kia Soong, (1985). *The Chinese Schools of Malaysia: A Protean Saga*. Kuala Lumpur: 1985, p. 69.

<sup>3</sup> Ang, Ming Chee, (2014). *Institutions and Social Mobilization: The Chinese Education Movement in Malaysia, 1951–2011*. ISEAS–Yusof Ishak Institute, p. 66.

<sup>4</sup> United Chinese School Teachers' Association of Malaysia (Jiao Zong), Research and Information Division, (2009, Sept.). *An Overview of Chinese Education in Malaysia* (Malai Xiya Huawen Jiaoyu Jiankuang, 马来西亚华文教育简况), p. 4.



the Chinese community quickly organized and mobilized to establish organizations such as Dong Zong and Jiao Zong, and through collective action, they maintained the independence and cultural continuity of the Chinese education system. Although Chinese teacher education was in a difficult situation during this period, it continued to play an important role in inheriting mother tongue education and supporting Chinese cultural identity through the persistence and adaptation of the community.

Overall, the historical evolution of Chinese teacher education in Malaya from 1935 to 1957 was a process of gradual localization, cultural adaptation and institutional integration in the interaction between colonial oppression and social autonomy. This process not only shaped the basic pattern of Chinese education in post-war Malaysia, but also laid an important foundation for the formation of a multicultural education system in the future. As a link between cultural identity and social integration, Chinese teacher education has demonstrated its tenacious vitality and profound historical significance in the historical process of Malaya's move towards an independent country.

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